

Vale District Bureau of Land Management
McKay Well to Antelope Reservoir Temporary Pipeline
Environmental Assessment
EA No. OR-030-00-011

I. PURPOSE AND NEED

A. Background

The Page Grazing Association is authorized to graze 634 head of cattle within Wallrock Allotment year-long in accordance with an allotment management plan implemented in 1990. Within that activity plan, a three year deferred rotation grazing schedule is defined for summer range pastures. Livestock water within these summer range pasture is provided by a number of dispersed reservoirs, springs and pipeline troughs.

B. Purpose and Need

In accordance with the allotment management plan for Wallrock Allotment, the following grazing schedule was planned for summer pastures during the 2000 season (figure 1):

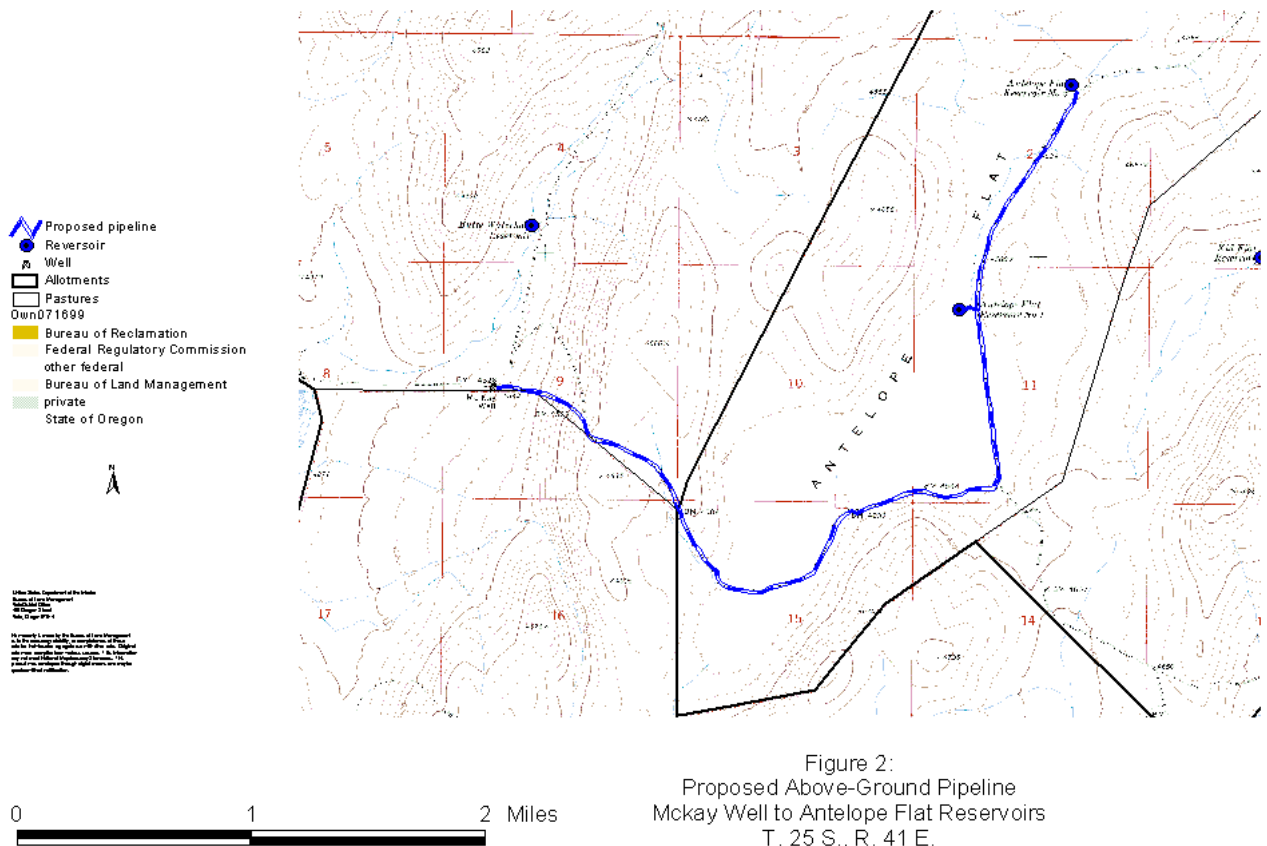
<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Scheduled Use</u>
Schaeffer	4/15 to 6/30
North McNulty	7/1 to 7/30
Antelope Seeding	7/1 to 7/30
State Block	8/1 to 9/15
West Juniper	9/16 to 10/31

Due to limited livestock water in reservoirs of North McNulty and Antelope Seeding pastures, the following revisions to the established grazing schedule , within the flexibility of the allotment management plan, were implemented with a letter to the operator dated June 22, 2000:

<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Scheduled Use</u>
Schaeffer	Through 7/4
State Block	7/4 to 9/15
West Juniper	7/4 to 9/15
North McNulty	9/16 to 10/31
Antelope Seeding	9/16 to 10/31

The revised schedule was implemented so as to be able to haul water to Antelope Seeding and North McNulty pastures during cooler conditions present in September and October as opposed to during the heat of the summer, thus limiting costs of water hauling. The revised schedule retained planned deferment of use of West Juniper, North McNulty, and Antelope Seeding pastures until after seed-set.

Following additional consideration, the livestock operator authorized to graze livestock in Wallrock Allotment requested authorization to pipe water from McKay Well within Middle Butte Pasture of Butte Allotment to Antelope Flat Reservoirs within Antelope Seeding Pasture of Wallrock Allotment (figure 2). The request was based on a desire to limit costs of water hauling by taking advantage of the opportunity to pipe water to a portion of the cattle grazing in North McNulty and Antelope Seeding pastures.



Additionally, water would be hauled to other dry reservoir and spring sites within Antelope Seeding and North McNulty pastures to provide livestock water during periods of scheduled use. Existing roads would be used for haul routes from pumping sites located off public land to troughs which would be placed within the disturbed area of existing reservoirs and spring developments.

B. No Action Alternative

Though authorization to haul water to dry reservoirs and spring sites within Antelope Seeding and North McNulty pastures would continue, authorization to lay pipeline to pump livestock water from offsite to portions of these two pasture would not be granted.

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Vegetation

Vegetation in Wallrock and Butte allotments consists of steppe shrub plant communities dominated by sagebrush species and bunchgrasses. The vegetation type which covers the majority of the allotments is dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp wyomingensis*) with an understory of perennial grass species, primarily Bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudotrogoneria spicata*), Sandberg's bluegrass (*Poa sandbergii*), Thurbers needlegrass

(*Stipa thurberiana*), basin wildrye (*Elymus cinereus*) and sparse cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*). Portions of Antelope Flat were seeded to crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*) in 1968. The dominant shrub species within the portion of Antelope Seeding Pasture seeded to crested wheatgrass is silver sagebrush (*Artemisia cana*).

B. Noxious Weeds

Scotch thistle, an aggressive biennial, dominates a small acreage at a number of locations within both allotments. Whitetop or hoary cress (*Cardaria spp.*), another perennial noxious weed is also present, especially adjacent to roads and other routes of seed distribution. Medusa-head, an aggressive annual grass, is present at limited sites with clay layers present in the soil. Though not known to be present in the proposed route of the pipeline, Russian knapweed is present at a number of locations within Wallrock Allotment, including the Antelope Flat Corrals.

C. Livestock Grazing

Page Grazing Association is the soul livestock operator authorized to graze livestock within Wallrock Allotment in accordance with the 1990 allotment management plan as identified in the background section of this document.

Gerald Butler is the soul livestock operator authorized to graze cattle in Butte Allotment, in accordance with the 1985 allotment management plan. During 2000, the following schedule (revised 5/19 due to limited livestock water) will be followed for 240 head between 4/1 and 11/7 within Butte Allotment:

<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Scheduled Use</u>
North Racehorse	4/1 to 5/15
South Racehorse	4/1 to 5/15
Middle Butte	5/15 to 7/15
South Butte	7/15 to 8/31
North Butte	8/31 to 11/7

D. Wildlife

The proposed project area is within year-long range for both mule deer and pronghorn antelope. Other wildlife species found in the area include neotropical migratory song birds, small mammals and reptiles. Sage grouse are not known to be present in adjacent areas with the nearest known lek site located 7 miles west and an additional site located a similar distance east.

There are no known wildlife species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 in the proposed project area.

E. Recreation and Visual Resources

Dispersed outdoor recreation in the proposed project area consists primarily of off highway vehicle usage and hunting of upland birds and big game animals. Some dispersed general

sightseeing occurs. The project area is within a visual resource management Class IV area. The objective of Class IV is to provide for management activities that require major modification of the landscape. These management activities may dominate the view and become the focus of viewer attention. However, every effort should be made to minimize the impact of these projects by carefully locating activities, minimizing disturbance, and designing the projects to conform to the characteristic landscape.

G. Cultural Resources

There are no known or suspected cultural resources within the project area.

H. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Plants

No plant species listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 are known to be present within the project area. No special status plant species are known or suspected within the immediate area.

I. Climate/Topography

The project area is in rolling hills where the elevation above sea level ranges from 4343 feet at McKay Well to 4600 feet in the saddle adjacent to the road to Antelope Flat. Semi desert shrub steppe vegetation communities result from cold winters and hot dry summers. The long term average annual precipitation is twelve inches. Precipitation occurs primarily as snow fall during the winter with occasional mid summer thunder storms.

J. Other Mandatory Elements

The following mandatory elements are either not present or would not be affected by the proposed action or alternatives:

1. Air Quality
2. Wild and Scenic Rivers
3. Native American Religious Concerns
4. Hazardous Wastes
5. Prime or Unique Farmlands
6. Wilderness Study Areas
7. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
8. Wild Horse/Burro Management
9. Wetlands/Riparian, Flood Plains
10. Environmental Justice

V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Proposed Action

1. Vegetation

Placement of pipeline on the soil surface and removal of all pipeline within one month of the completion of scheduled grazing would increase traffic on existing roads, slightly impacting vegetation. Minor disturbance of vegetation would occur within existing shoulders of graded and two track roads between McKay Well and Antelope Flat Reservoirs. Additional traffic resulting from maintenance activities would also minimally impact vegetation on roads. Livestock impacts to vegetation would not differ from that which has occurred in previous years since livestock watering points would be unchanged.

2. Noxious weeds

Additional traffic during construction, maintenance and removal of the pipeline would add additional risk for dispersal of weed seed and soil disturbance along roads providing sites for weed establishment. Fewer impacts from noxious weeds would occur from pipeline construction than from hauling water as less repeat trips would be made between sites with weed presence and those areas as yet uninhabited by weeds.

3. Livestock Grazing

Construction and operation of the proposed pipeline would support livestock grazing at current authorized levels during this year of below average availability of livestock water. Maintenance of the proposed pipeline would provide additional opportunities for the livestock operators to ensure management of livestock in compliance with terms and conditions of grazing authorizations. Laying an estimated 4 to 5 miles of pipeline and associated maintenance during scheduled use of Antelope Seeding Pasture would add to the cost of livestock production in Wallrock Allotment.

4. Soils/Watershed

Impacts to soils and watershed values would be unchanged from those which have occurred in recent years since livestock water would continue to be provided only at sites previously authorized.

5. Wildlife

Negative impacts to wildlife would occur as a result of implementing the proposed action. Additional availability of water during this year of numerous dry reservoirs would benefit wildlife species by retaining adjacent habitat available for use.

6. Recreation and Visual Resources

Recreation values would be unchanged by the proposed action. Visual impacts of pipe laid adjacent to roads would be consistent with objectives for Class IV management. Visual impacts for disturbance of vegetation and soil resources would be unchanged from existing conditions.

7. Cultural Resources

Cultural resources would not be affected by the proposed action.

8. T&E Plants

Special Status plant species would not be affected by the proposed action.

B. No Action Alternative

1. Vegetation

The no action alternative would not affect vegetation resources so long as other methods of providing livestock water are implemented. In the event that water is not hauled to livestock in Antelope Seeding Pasture, utilization levels during this dry year would be reduced concurrent with the amount of available water.

2. Noxious weeds

The no action alternative would not affect noxious weed distribution or dominance.

3. Livestock Grazing

Lack of water in Antelope Seeding Pasture would require costly hauling of additional water to make use of available forage for livestock production or the need to find alternative forage sources where water is more readily available.

4. Soils/Watershed

The no action alternative would not affect soils or watershed values in ways other than is currently occurring.

5. Wildlife

Dry reservoirs would not provide wildlife water sources in the absence of the operator hauling water. Some traditional wildlife habitats would remain unused or lightly used in the absence of close water sources.

6. Recreation and Visual Resources

The no action alternative would not affect recreation or visual resources.

7. Cultural Resources

The no action alternative would not affect cultural resources.

8. T & E Plant Species

The no action alternative would not affect T&E plant species.

VI. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Jack Horton, livestock operator Wallrock Allotment
Steve Russell, livestock management Wallrock Allotment
Gerald Butler, livestock operator Butte Allotment
Walt VanDyke, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Idaho Watersheds Project

VII. LIST OF PREPARERS/REVIEWERS

Steve Christensen	Rangeland Management Specialist
Randy Eyre	Rangeland Management Specialist
Ron Rembowski	Rangeland Management Specialist
Tom Hilken	Rangeland Management Specialist; Planning and Environmental Coordinator
Bob Alward	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Jean Findley	Botanist
Diane Pritchard	Archaeologist
Shaney Rockefeller	Hydrologist/Soil Scientist
Al Bammann	Wildlife Biologist
Lynne Silva	Range Technician, Weeds
Tom Dabbs	Multi Resources Staff Supervisor
Roy Masinton	Field Manager, Malheur Resource Area

XII. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION REPORT

Finding of No Significant Impact / Decision Record

On the basis of the information contained in this Environmental Assessment and all other information available, it is my determination that the proposed action is in conformance with the land use plan for Malheur Resource Area and does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and that an EIS is not required. It is my decision to implement the proposed action described in this EA (OR-030-00-011).

s/ Roy L. Masinton
Field Manager
Malheur Resource Area

10/17/00
Date